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(54) Title: A METHOD OF PRODUCING AN ORTHODONTIC BRACKET

(57) Abstract

A method for providing an orthodontic bracket for placement on a maloccluded tooth in a patient's jaw to correct the malocclusion, comprises the steps of generating digitized information representative of the shape of the tooth and its location with respect to the jaw; using data processing equipment to generate a mathematical model of the tooth as located in the jaw, from the digitized data, and to calculate the finish position in the jaw to which the tooth is to be moved; determining the form of the bracket and its placement position on the tooth in order to move the tooth to the finish position in a selected course of orthodontic treatment; and providing the bracket of such form. A jig may also be provided to ensure correct placement of the bracket on the tooth.

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A Method of Producing an Orthodontic Bracket

This invention relates to the provision of orthodontic brackets and like appliances.

Early in the history of orthodontics, dentists constructed their own appliances to treat patients. As the use of appliances grew, the orthodontic supply company became economically feasible. At first, all orthodontic brackets, or braces, whether produced by the doctor or supply company, were designed simply as handles to which the force-producing agents, most often archwires, were attached. Both the magnitudes and directions of orthodontic forces were controlled by placing appropriate bends in the archwires. See for example, Figures 1 and 3 of U.S. Patent No. 3,447,128.

The next major evolutionary step in appliance design was the "singular wire" concept. See, for example, Figures 2 and 4 to 19 of U.S. Patent No. 3,477,128. Force magnitudes were still determined by wire and not the brackets. However, force vector directions were transferred from the wire to the brackets. Bracket slots were cut so that the desired forces were applied to each tooth in the arch by simply attaching, fully ligating, a straight length of wire with rectangular cross-section into the bracket slots. Furthermore, different bracket base thicknesses were employed to control labial-lingual dental positioning. See, for example, U.S. Patent No. 3,660,900. These developments reduced considerably the amount of wire bending, and therefore, the length of time required by a dentist to treat a case. While such systems are generally considered to represent the state-of-the-art today, there remains a major disadvantage in the treatment mechanics of these products.

In the current "straight wire" systems, of which

there are several, all bracket force vectors for specific tooth types (e.g., upper canines, upper central incisors, lower first molars, etc.) are manufactured to population averages. Thus there is no individual adaptability in any given straight wire system. The patient's specific pretreatment malocclusion, the condition requiring treatment, dental surface morphology, and facial type tend to be completely disregarded, as are individualized treatment goals. It is well known, however, that these factors influence the selection of ideal mechanical parameters for every case.

Viewed from one aspect the invention provides a method for producing an orthodontic bracket for placement on a maloccluded tooth in a patient's jaw to correct the malocclusion, comprising the steps of generating digitized information representative of the shape of the tooth and its location with respect to the jaw; using data processing equipment to generate a mathematical model of the tooth as located in the jaw, from the digitized data, and to calculate the finish position in the jaw to which the tooth is to be moved; determining the form of the bracket and its placement position on the tooth in order to move the tooth to the finish position in a selected course of orthodontic treatment; and providing the bracket of such form.

Viewed from another aspect the invention provides a method for determining orthodontic bracket placement on a maloccluded tooth in a subject's jaw to correct the malocclusion, comprising the steps of generating digital information defining the shape and location of the maloccluded tooth with respect to the patient's jaw; generating a mathematical model of the maloccluded tooth as positioned in the jaw from the digitized information; calculating the finish position in the jaw to which the maloccluded tooth is to be moved from the digitized information; and calculating the placement position of an orthodontic bracket on the maloccluded

tooth required in order to move the malocclused tooth to its finish position by a preselected orthodontic treatment.

Viewed from a further aspect the invention provides a method for determining orthodontic bracket placement on a dental arch to correct a malocclusion, comprising the steps of generating digital information defining the shape and location of the teeth with respect to the arch; generating a mathematical model of the teeth as positioned in the arch from the digitized information; calculating the finish position in the arch of the teeth from the digitized information; and calculating the placement position of orthodontic brackets on selected teeth required in order to move malocclused teeth to their finish positions by a preselected orthodontic treatment.

Viewed from a still further aspect the invention provides a method for determining orthodontic appliance placement on at least one dental arch to correct malocclusion between teeth in the arches, comprising the steps of generating digital information defining the shape and location of the teeth in each dental arch with respect to the other dental arch; generating a mathematical model of the arches as positioned in the head from the digitized information; calculating the finish position of the dental arches which is required to correct the malocclusion from the digitized information; and calculating the placement position of an orthodontic appliance on at least one of the arches required in order to correct the malocclusion by a preselected orthodontic treatment.

Thus, in accordance with the invention it is possible to have orthodontic applicance placement with individualized parameters.

In carrying out the invention, and in accoradnce with the particular method of subsequent orthodontic treatment which has been selected to be used on the

patient by the practitioner, the correct position in which to place a bracket on the tooth to move the tooth to the finish position is calculated from the mathematical model and finish position which are determined. The correct bracket position is defined as that position which yields zero force in all directions, if, and only if, the subject tooth is in its ideal position with the archwire installed. Thus, when the brackets are subsequently placed and fixed in the patient's mouth, an archwire is placed on the bracket slots, and the archwire is fully ligated, the resultant individual force vectors will automatically move the teeth to the finish position.

The particular type of orthodontic bracket to be used in the method may be selected either before or after calculating its placement position on the tooth. In either event, in the preferred embodiments of the invention a standard bracket is thereafter modified, if desired, so as to provide for tooth movement to the finish position which has been determined individually for the patient, in view of the patient's physical deviations from the dental and skeletal statistical averages for an ideal finish position.

Precise fixation of the brackets at the prescribed location in the patient's mouth is necessary for the proper corrective forces to be achieved. A further step in the preferred embodiment of the invention is to calculate the shape of a positioning device, such as a bracket positioning jig, for the orthodontic appliance to provide for the positioning of the bracket on the tooth in precisely the calculated placement position, and then forming a positioning jig to conform to the shape of the jig so calculated. When the positioning jig with the bracket attached is placed over a patient's tooth, the bracket is automatically located at the precise position which will result in the required force vectors for treatment when attached to the tooth.

In the preferred embodiments the forces to effect treatment are produced by archwires. The archwires, when installed, act as springs which have been deflected by an amount proportional to the deviation of the tooth from its ideal location. An archwire, preformed in accordance with the requirements to move the affected tooth to its finish position when attached to the bracket, produces appropriate force magnitudes at various stages of treatment to move the tooth to its ideal position. An additional step in the preferred embodiments is thus the step of forming an archwire with respect to the mathematical model and the bracket into the configuration to cause the tooth to move to the calculated finish position when installed in the bracket on the tooth.

While normally the orthodontic treatment to be undertaken with brackets provided in accordance with the invention will contemplate realignment of the patient's teeth in one or both arches, or even one arch with respect to the other, the preferred method of bracket production, for purposes of clarity and brevity of description, will be described with respect to the repositioning of a single maloccluded tooth.

The first step of the method is the generation of accurate digital information defining the shape and location of the maloccluded tooth with respect to the patient's jaw. This information may be generated in a number of ways, such as electromechanically, by laser scanning, sonic ranging, digital video scanning or magnetically. Various devices which may be so utilized are described in Rekow, Computer Aided Design And Manufacture In Dentistry: A Review Of The State Of The Art, 58 The Journal of Prosthetic Dentistry 512 (1987). Sonic ranging devices of this type are described, for example, in U.S. Patent No. 3,821,469.

The second step of the preferred embodiment is the generation of a mathematical model, utilizing the

digitized information. The use of digitized information to generate mathematical models is well known in the Computer-Aided Design ("CAD") art, and need not be described at the present time in view of the state of the art. It should be noted that each of the three systems described in the Rekow article previously referred to uses CAD.

The mathematical model may be as detailed as the particular circumstances require, dependent only upon the quantity of digitized information generated in the prior step. Thus, in many applications of the preferred embodiment, a complete "model~", as that term is used in the dental art to refer to a full replication of the upper and lower dental arches and associated jaw structure, will be mathematically generated. A physical embodiment of such a model is shown, for example, in Figure 1 of U.S. Patent No. 2,467,432.

The next step is the calculation of the "finish" position of the maloccluded tooth or teeth, with respect to their positions in the mathematical model. Movement to the finish position typically may involve "tipping", that is, movement toward or away from adjacent teeth, "torquing", that is, angulating toward or away from the center of the mouth, and "rotation", that is, rotary movement of the tooth about its longitudinal axis, intrusional-extrusional or bodily movement.

There are a number of methods of treatment commonly used by the orthodontist. Each method takes different factors into account with varying degrees of emphasis. For the purposes of the preferred embodiment the orthodontist provides a description of the desired results, which is prescribed for reaching the finish position of each individual tooth relative to adjacent teeth, opposing teeth, supporting bony foundations and soft tissue, and the entire cranial-facial complex. Utilizing standard statistical tooth position data, the repositioning of the teeth is calculated to provide a

methematical model of the finish position. In the prior art, a similar step was accomplished manually in order to account for individual tooth morphology by physically removing duplicated teeth from a model and repositioning them in a new model in the finish position. See for example, Figure 3 above in the above referenced U.S. Patent No. 2,467,432. However this procedure did not take into account the individual finish position desired relative to the cranial-facial base.

In the preferred method, this repositioning is done mathematically by appropriate software programs which may be derived by conventional means for the particular method of treatment elected by the orthodontist. An "ideal" finish position is not based upon statistical averages and takes into account the variation and physical characteristics of the individual patient. Therefore, it is preferably that, the program be utilized to provide a customized finish position for the particular patient, so as to make the finish position ideal for the patient, rather than attempting to have the patient duplicate the statistically average finish position.

After the finish position for the teeth in question has been calculated, the placement position of the orthodontic appliance, a bracket, for example, is calculated. In the presently preferred embodiment, a straight wire technique is utilized. The bracket manufacturers provide positioning information recommendations as to their brackets in the ideal position. This information is utilized together with the mathematical model of the finish position to calculate the bracket placement position on the teeth.

While it is possible to position the brackets on the teeth in a variety of methods, in the preferred embodiment there is carried out the step of calculating the shape of a bracket positioning jig from the mathematical model in order to ensure that the bracket

is accurately placed. A large variety of positioning jigs are known in the art, and such devices extend from rather simple direct application devices, such as is shown in U.S. Patent No. 3,686,762 to complex devices such as are shown in U.S. Patent Nos. 4,160,322, 4,183,141 and 4,360,341, which conform in shape to and overlay the tooth itself. In its broadest sense, the term "bracket positioning jig" as used herein includes devices utilized in the "indirect" method of bracket application, such as is described in U.S. Patent No. 4,160,322, to position simultaneously a plurality of brackets on the patients teeth. Thus, after the particular form of jig has been selected, the shape of the jig required to place the bracket or brackets in the previously calculated placement position or positions is calculated. Thereafter, in the preferred embodiment, the next step of the present invention is to form the positioning jig calculated in the previous step.

In as much as the mathematical model of the arch has been calculated in the preferred embodiment, another step which may be utilized is the performing of an archwire for attachment to the bracket to conform to the orthodontic treatment to be undertaken. The particular details as to shape, size, and the like of the archwire are matters of choice of the orthodontist, depending upon the particular treatment and brackets involved, and normally on the subject of specification in the prescription, if the step is to be undertaken.

Orthodontic brackets are generally manufactured in standard types in accordance with population averages. One method of creating individualized brackets is to cut custom bracket slots for each patient. The cost of that procedure is usually prohibitive. The computerized design method, according to the present embodiment utilizes modification of the angulation of the bracket/tooth interface on an individualized basis in order to cause the bracket to produce a desired force

vector on the tooth. Specific force vectors are prescribed, and an entire system or brackets/adhesive placement, pre-formed archwires, and peripheral appliances (head gear, elastics, etc.) is selected, if so desired.

In some instances a particular bracket may be selected and, for the particular case, modified in certain respects before calculating its placement position. In such an instance, the placement position is calculated for modified form of the bracket. In other instances, a selected bracket may, after calculation of its placement position, be determined to require modification in order to be placed in the required placement position. In such an instance, the bracket may be modified after calculation of the placement position to prevent its placement in accordance therewith.

In the method of the preferred embodiment, standard brackets are modified as appropriate to produce the required treatment force vectors by use of a structural adhesive system. The modification of standard brackets by use of a structural adhesive system is known in the art. The structural adhesive is initially a moldable putty which easily take on the contour of the dental surface to which the appliance will be fixed, and which provides the interface between that surface and the bracket base. A premachined archwire slot in the bracket face can thus be oriented with axes of freedom with respect to the dental surface so as to incorporate precisely the required force vectors. In practicing one embodiment the bracket is correctly positioned on a laboratory model of the tooth, and the adhesive is hardened to a rigid state by a irradiation with ultraviolet light, followed by oven post-cure. The adhesive is then an inseparable, integral part of the bracket, now customized for that patient's individual tooth.

While the use of a moldable putty to interface between the bracket and the tooth is satisfactory, the present method may be utilized in conjunction with computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture (CAD/CAM), as described in the Rekow article referred to above, to provide a machined or cast base conforming to the tooth morphology and containing an appropriately positioned bracket receiving recess or fitting, so as to permit the base to be fixed to either the bracket or the tooth. The other of the two is then fixed to the base, thereby simplifying the attachment of the bracket to the tooth and its customized ideal position for the individual patient. By this method, standard brackets are readily adapted to customized use, so as to simplify the inventory retirements of the practitioner. Additionally, such customized brackets may be provided to the practitioner by a dental laboratory, where the digitized information is utilized in the process of providing the practitioner with the required dental appliances for the correction of the malocclusion.

As will be apparent, the practice of the present invention may be restricted to a single tooth, may be utilized with some or all of the teeth in a given dental arch, or utilized with teeth in both of the arches of the patient. Therefore, while the description of a preferred embodiment has been in certain instances, with respect to a single tooth for purposes of brevity and clarity, the practice of the invention is not so limited.

Furthermore, the present invention may also be utilized with respect to orthodontic diagnoses involving the requirement of movement of one arch, in its entirety, with respect to the other, as where the patient exhibits a lateral offset. In such an instance, a mathematical model is calculated for both arches in their relative positions with respect to one another. The preferred embodiments will take into account the

relative resistance to movement of various teeth or groups of teeth. Bracket positions can then be customized to account for these forces. Indications can be provided for the inter-dental arch force mechanics in order to correct or maintain the position of each individual arch over its respective jaw structure as well as relative to the opposing arch and jaw.

It will be appreciated that modifications to the methods set forth herein may be made by those skilled in the art.

CLAIMS

1. A method for producing an orthodontic bracket for placement on a malocclused tooth in a patient's jaw to correct the malocclusion, comprising the steps of generating digitized information representative of the shape of the tooth and its location with respect to the jaw; using data processing equipment to generate a mathematical model of the tooth as located in the jaw, from the digitized data, and to calculate the finish position in the jaw to which the tooth is to be moved; determining the form of the bracket and its placement position on the tooth in order to move the tooth to the finish position in a selected course of orthodontic treatment; and providing the bracket of such form.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the form of the bracket is determined before its placement position is determined.
3. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the form of the bracket is determined after its placement position is determined.
4. A method as claimed in claim 1, 2, or 3, wherein the bracket has an initial shape, selected from standard shapes, that is modified to the determined form.
5. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, including the provision of means for enabling the correct placement of the bracket on the tooth.
6. A method as claimed in any claim 5, including the steps of determining the shape of, and providing, a jig to ensure correct placement of the bracket on the tooth.
7. A method as claimed in any preceding claim,

including the steps of determining the shape of, and providing, a preformed archwire for use with the bracket.

8. A method as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the digitised information is generated for a plurality of teeth positioned in a dental arch, and a plurality of brackets are provided, each of whose form and placement position on a respective tooth is determined to achieve movement of the tooth to a respective finish position.

9. A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein digitised information is also generated for the other dental arch.

10. A method for determining orthodontic bracket placement on a malocclused tooth in a subject's jaw to correct the malocclusion, comprising the steps of generating digital information defining the shape and location of the malocclused tooth with respect to the patient's jaw; generating a mathematical model of the malocclused tooth as positioned in the jaw from the digitized information; calculating the finish position in the jaw to which the malocclused tooth is to be moved from the digitized information; and calculating the placement position of an orthodontic bracket on the malocclused tooth required in order to move the malocclused tooth to its finish position by a preselected orthodontic treatment.

11. A method for determining orthodontic bracket placement on a dental arch to correct a malocclusion, comprising the steps of generating digital information defining the shape and location of the teeth with respect to the arch; generating a mathematical model of the teeth as positioned in the arch from the digitized information; calculating the finish position in the arch of the teeth from the digitized information; and

calculating the placement position of orthodontic brackets on selected teeth required in order to move malocclused teeth to their finish positions by a preselected orthodontic treatment.

12. A method for determining orthodontic appliance placement on at least one dental arch to correct malocclusion between teeth in the arches, comprising the steps of generating digital information defining the shape and location of the teeth in each dental arch with respect to the other dental arch; generating a mathematical model of the arches as positioned in the head from the digitized information; calculating the finish position of the dental arches which is required to correct the malocclusion from the digitized information; and calculating the placement position of an orthodontic appliance on at least one of the arches required in order to correct the malocclusion by a preselected orthodontic treatment.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/US 90/00361

I. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER (if several classification symbols apply, indicate all) *

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both National Classification and IPC

IPC⁵: A 61 C 7/00

II. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum Documentation Searched ?

Classification System	Classification Symbols
IPC ⁵	A 61 C
Documentation Searched other than Minimum Documentation to the Extent that such Documents are Included in the Fields Searched *	

III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT*

Category *	Citation of Document, ¹¹ with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages ¹²	Relevant to Claim No. ¹³
A	US, A, 4663720 (DURET) 5 May 1987 see the whole document --	1, 4
A	EP, A1, 0025911 (HEITLINGER) 1 April 1981 see abstract --	1
A	EP, A1, 0091876 (DURET) 19 October 1983 see abstract --	1
A	Proceedings of the 38th Annual Conference on Engineering in Medicine and Biology, 30 September - 2 October 1985, Chicago, Illinois, volume 27, The Alliance for Engineering in Medicine and Biology, Publishers, (Washington, D.C., US), E.D. Rekow et al.: "CAD/CAM in dentistry", page 298 -----	1, 4

* Special categories of cited documents:¹⁰

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"Z" document member of the same patent family

IV. CERTIFICATION

Date of the Actual Completion of the International Search

10th May 1990

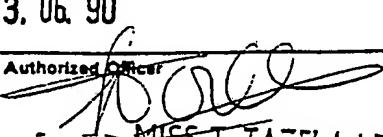
Date of Mailing of this International Search Report

13.06.90

International Searching Authority

EUROPEAN PATENT OFFICE

Signature of Authorized Officer


MICHAEL T. MULLER

ANNEX TO THE INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT
ON INTERNATIONAL PATENT APPLICATION NO.

US 9000361

SA 34550

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on 12/06/90
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Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)		Publication date
US-A- 4663720	05-05-87	US-A-	4742464	03-05-88
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